

VZCZCXYZ0018
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTU #0708/01 2711309
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 281309Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6809
RUEHPNH/NVC PORTSMOUTH
INFO RUEHC/ALL NEAR EAST COLLECTIVE
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1972
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0813
RUEHVT/AMEMBASSY VALLETTA 0405
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1679

UNCLAS TUNIS 000708

DEPT FOR CA/FPP
DEPT ALSO PASS TO KCC
CAIRO FOR CROWAN

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - TUNIS

Ref: (A) 08 STATE 74840

11. Post responses to ref A follow.

a. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Tunis is a low-fraud post. Most detected fraud is in the form of readily identifiable falsified employment or education documents. There are no indicators of organized fraud rings or document vendors. Rather, these appear to be individual efforts. Tunisian civil documents are generally secure, with good host government controls on the production of birth certificates, marriage certificates, and passports. For reasons of geography, language and history, most emigration from Tunisia - legal and otherwise - is to Europe. According to official figures, Tunisia has 14.2 percent unemployment, but it is generally believed to be much higher in some regions. Despite the present low rate of population growth, a demographic peak is now hitting higher education and the job market. Tunisia has invested heavily in education and the number of students enrolled at university has soared from 41,000 in 1986 to over 370,000 in 2009. Providing jobs for these highly educated people represents a major challenge for the Government of Tunisia. According to the World Bank, unemployed graduates represent 42.5 percent of the total unemployment rate. As of early 2009, Tunisia's average annual income per capita was approximately \$3,982.

With CONS Tripoli now fully staffed and operational, Embassy Tunis no longer provides NIV visa services for persons residing in Libya. Embassy Tunis continues to process Libyan IV cases. With two Foreign Service Officers and five Locally Engaged Staff, Embassy Tunis disburses routine anti-fraud pursuit to the officer who handled the case, whether NIV or IV. Embassy Tunis' Fraud Prevention Unit is primarily focused on tracking, coordination and prevention.

b. NIV FRAUD: In general, NIV fraud is infrequent. Post occasionally uncovers document fraud, but these appear to be individual efforts to mislead the consular officer, not evidence of any organized fraud. The demographics of Tunisian applicants vary widely, but the majority of applications are for B1/B2 visas. Of particular concern are members of group tours, older women seeking to join their children who are in the U.S. illegally (older men are rarely seen, while many older women seem to seek to travel to the U.S. to provide childcare services), recent high school graduates, and Tunisian F class applicants. One recent validation study indicates that increased scrutiny of group tours has resulted in a 100 percent return rate since April 2008. The majority of third country national applicants are linked to the African Development Bank (ADB), which is headquartered in Tunis. Applicants from the ADB are usually extraordinarily well qualified. Many children of ABD employees apply for F class visas, as the ADB provides 80 percent scholarships and many of the ADB employees have

studied in the U.S. A recent validation study of ADB applicants confirms that ADB candidates have virtually a 100 percent return rate.

c. IV FRAUD: While fraud is infrequent, Tunis, like most posts, sees its share of questionable marriage cases. In the last six months, seven cases have been returned to the Fraud Prevention Unit at the National Visa Center for fraud review. In particular, a trend involving young Tunisian men who marry older lower-income American women after only a few days in Tunisia seems to be slowly on the SPQ:nJD3*!ri`X^Qfoners have recently divorced their American spouses after obtaining their American citizenship and have married a Tunisian cousin or other extended family member; this second marriage is culturally quite common and is often one indicator of a valid marriage for Tunisian applicants.

Libyan immigrant visa cases arXQQea~l[]jJ|2Q=XbQod quality machine readable

documents. Their issuance is tightly controlled by the Tunisian Government. The single-data page is separate from the cover, digitally printed, and is laminated. Digitally printed photos appear on two places on the data page. The text is in both English and Arabic, although applicants' Arabic middle names are routinely omitted from the English translations. Embassy Tunis includes a translation in the alias field of every application. Each of the 32 passport pages is numbered in multiple places, including ultraviolet fluorescing page numbers that change places systematically. Other ultraviolet fluorescing features include a picture of the stadium of Rades on every page. The remainder of the passport does not fluoresce. The paper is microprinted with a green and red crosshatching. Pages 3 through the back cover are perforated with the passport number at the bottom center of the page. Tunisian passport numbers are six digits prefixed by a letter. Recent letter series include T, V, and Z.

l. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: The Tunisian legal system regularly prosecutes persons for visa and document fraud. Punishment for document vendors often includes prison sentences of one to five years. To date, these cases have involved unnamed European nations. Post is not aware of any document fraud involving US documents, and the host government has never alerted post to any such cases involving US documents.

Relations with the host government on the working level, while professional, are frequently lacking in substance. It is very difficult to achieve much without the host government insisting upon a request being submitted by diplomatic note. The host government often fails to respond to these requests. In particular, access to and cooperation with airlines and airport authorities is restricted, preventing the establishment of more robust collaboration regarding screening of fraudulent documents and travelers, detection of impostors and washed visas.

m. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: For IV cases, Libyan document quality continues to be the area of most concern for Embassy Tunis. The dubious nature of much of the data presented, the method and manner in which official corrections and amendments are undertaken, and haphazard implementation of standards raise serious questions about the integrity of Libyan travel documents.

n. STAFFING AND TRAINING: The vice consul serves as FPM in close consultation with the Consular Chief. Embassy Tunis plans to send the officer to an FPM course at FSI as soon as possible. There is not a dedicated LES fraud prevention position but a designated LES staff member acts as the FPM Assistant. All consular team members are sensitive to fraud issues and understand the importance of both internal controls and our external image in relation to fraud prevention.

GRAY

timely retraction and in a non-disqualifying context.

e. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD: Embassy Tunis has seen only sporadic and unorganized attempts to commit ACS or passport fraud.

f. ADOPTION FRAUD: Local law does not allow for the adoption of a Tunisian child by foreign nationals. Only a US citizen who is married to a Tunisian national or is a dual-national can adopt in this country. Because of this, our adoption workload is nonexistent. We have not detected any efforts at fraud or

misrepresentation in this area.

g. USE OF DNA TESTING: DNA testing is rarely used by Embassy Tunis. DNA testing exists in Tunisia and is required by Tunisian law for cases where paternity is in question.

h. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD: Post receives one or two reports of a lost/stolen I-551 per month. We process these cases in close coordination with DHS colleagues in Casablanca, and to date have not detected any efforts at fraud or misrepresentation in this area.

i. ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, TERRORIST TRAVEL: To date, Embassy Tunis has not found evidence of illicit facilitation networks or fraudulent document production centers. The penalties for forgery and fraud in Tunisia are severe.

j. DS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS: The Consular section and the RSO section maintain a close working relationship, meeting regularly. Cases for criminal fraud are referred on an ad-hoc basis as necessary.

k. HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, AND CIVIL REGISTRY: Current Tunisian passports are good quality machine readable documents. Their issuance is tightly controlled by the Tunisian Government. The single-data page is separate from the cover, digitally printed, and is laminated. Digitally printed photos appear on two places on the data page. The text is in both English and Arabic, although applicants' Arabic middle names are routinely omitted from the English translations. Embassy Tunis includes a translation in the alias field of every application. Each of the 32 passport pages is numbered in multiple places, including ultraviolet fluorescing page numbers that change places systematically. Other ultraviolet fluorescing features include a picture of the stadium of Rades on every page. The remainder of the passport does not fluoresce. The paper is microprinted with a green and red crosshatching. Pages 3 through the back cover are perforated with the passport number at the bottom center of the page. Tunisian passport numbers are six digits prefixed by a letter. Recent letter series include T, V, and Z.

l. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: The Tunisian legal system regularly prosecutes persons for visa and document fraud. Punishment for document vendors often includes prison sentences of one to five years. To date, these cases have involved unnamed European nations. Post is not aware of any document fraud involving US documents, and the host government has never alerted post to any such cases involving US documents.

Relations with the host government on the working level, while professional, are frequently lacking in substance. It is very difficult to achieve much without the host government insisting upon a request being submitted by diplomatic note. The host government often fails to respond to these requests. In particular, access to and cooperation with airlines and airport authorities is restricted, preventing the establishment of more robust collaboration regarding screening of fraudulent documents and travelers, detection of impostors and washed visas.

m. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: For IV cases, Libyan document quality continues to be the area of most concern for Embassy Tunis. The dubious nature of much of the data presented, the method and manner in which official corrections and amendments are undertaken, and haphazard implementation of standards raise serious questions about the integrity of Libyan travel documents.

n. STAFFING AND TRAINING: The vice consul serves as FPM in close consultation with the Consular Chief. Embassy Tunis plans to send the officer to an FPM course at FSI as soon as possible. There is not a dedicated LES fraud prevention position but a designated LES staff member acts as the FPM Assistant. All consular team members are sensitive to fraud issues and understand the importance of both internal controls and our external image in relation to fraud prevention.

GRAY